Lulu Craig

Oral History

Interviewed by Mary Hyde

Starts at about 14min on Disc 2 titled George Mathisson

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What was it like as a student…you started training about 1925?

Well it was 3 years. I taught 2 years before that. Wouldn't let me go into training. I had a breakdown (?) in high school lost a year and I had 2 more years to go. And when I came home doctor said I wasn't strong enough. And so the teacher I had was on the county board and asked me to teach (unintelligible) that year. And I said are you crazy? She said I taught you through the fourth grade so you ought to do something. I was homeless at the time (?). so I taught for 2 years there asked me back. Then I went to nurses training.

How many classmates did you have?

Well my class started out at about 16 but just 4 of us finished. And I won $50 once.

What for? Best student or best nurse?

I don't know what it was for I didn't think it was for me. I was graduating at that time…one that was graduating in January. We were supposed to go from May to May you know. So she'd been out and the other 2 was after me so I don't know how come I got it. So this family was presenting $50 every year to the one that earned it or should have it and I was the last one to get it.

Tell me about Miss Laxton everyone tells me she was a perfectionist?

Yes she was. She was trained at Johns Hopkins I believe…best I can remember. Their home was in Hickory or somewhere. She certainly did call you in and tell you if you'd done something wrong. And one time I went in and told her something and she said "you did the right thing" and I was so happy. We had another teacher…she trained there. For some reason she didn't like me and she would pulled things off on me until I couldn't stand it so I reported her so she was nicer to me after that. Because she was a Biltmore (?) graduate, she thought she could just do anything she wanted to. And one the doctors heard her speak to me and she pulled her out and called her out.

So I got along alright with the doctors. One time a patient wanted me to message her legs and I told her no I'd better not. The next morning I came in. I was in charge of the floor. I was

following the doctor in and she was telling him. Well I waited until she got it told. He said "if she had done that I would have fired her from the training." She never did like me after that. I met her up at uh…that place you go across Sylva…a man that worked there that took care of animals…he invited me out to dinner and took me up there. She came to the table. She recognized him…she recognized me too…(She apologized)….

When you knew Miss Laxton was she an older lady.

Middle aged or something.

Was she director of everything? Superintendent of the hospital and the school?

Yeah.

Was Dr. Westray Battle there? Dr.Lynch?

Oh yeah Dr. Lynch and Dr. Ivey. He took care of me. I got sick. I thought I was supposed to get Dr. Lynch. But when I first saw him get out of the car I went over there before lunchtime. I said 'if that's not a farmer, I never saw one.' Come to find out he was a farmer on his days off.

You lived in the nurses' home there?

Yeah it was right across from the Presbyterian Church. Just about where the new hospital.

What was the nurse's residence like?

We slept together a lot of us. All of us shared a room. 3 or 4 a room something like that.

How many people living in nurse's home at one time?

Mrs. Laxton and another one lived upstairs in hospital.

Miss Chick?

She was a dietician I tell you. She'd tell me how to do something and I wrote it down right quick. Etc.

How many patients at hospital when you were a student?

I guess anywhere from 45-50. I don't remember now. We had 3 floors…(describes differing wings and areas of hospital). ..when doctors got sick that's where they'd go.

Dr. Lynch was hard to take care of. He was supposed to be the head of everything. I thought Dr.? (maybe Atkins)was the best? …Dr. Fortune? maybe…he got tickled one. They were operating on somebody and I got on my tip toes to see them operating on somebodies stomach. He took hold of my dress…he pulled me back, he said he was afraid I was going to fall into the stomach. I think he was the only doctor that would put up with that.

Were there many babies born in the hospital or were they mostly still born at home?

There were quite a few born there. Because I took care of the babies for a while. We'd have anywhere from 10 to 16 babies. And then the children's part was there. And one baby came they found up a hotel. Brought it down weighed about 3 ½ pounds and they figured it was 2 or 3 months old. I had to take care of it in the nursery and then the children's part. And I decided I was going to adopt it after I finished school. So I made an effort to go in there, I wasn't supposed to but I'd prowl around in there. Anyway, I was off duty and the girls asked me how I felt. We ate and gossiped and all and you know they didn't tell me that baby had died until the next morning. They asked if I was still planning to adopt that baby and I said yes. They said well we better tell you now, he died last night. I thought that was kind of bad. They all decided not to tell me that night and wait until tomorrow.

When you were a student nurse did you have to pay tuition at the Biltmore Hospital?

No. we got $5 a month. You came in with your uniforms and then they supplied what you needed. Mother made my uniforms… I think 4. It was collar and cuffs. Blue stripe and white.

After graduation did you get stripes on you cap?

No we wore that the 3rd year…or it might have been the second year.

You know Nell Lipe didn't you? What was she like?

I have something of hers right over there (m.h. "oh a box"). She made it. She was a patient there and when I first saw her there I thought she was a man. You know she wore her hair short. After that, I had to help pick (?). and so that was her favorite thing. When you get off at 7 o'clock you'd go to that class. And sometimes I'd ride with her towards the dairy. I'd push her and she'd say I can do it myself and there she'd go. She was a diabetic. She'd invite us to come to eat.

Where did she live?

Coming down past the hospital …(looking at map maybe and finding house?)

Who did she live with?

Her mother. Her mother did the cooking. And her being a diabetic she wasn't supposed to eat everything. She'd invite us in and she'd be eating with us and her mother would come in and she'd say Nell you're not supposed to do that. Then she'd stop. That's why she was in the hospital when I first met her.

Did she have a diabetic coma?

No. she just had some trouble that brought her in.

Had she had polio or was it a birth injury? Her legs deformed?

I think she had polio. I'm not sure. It's been so long. But her sister worked up at a place in Asheville who made hats.

Was it Kathleen Lipe? Her sister who made the hats?

I don't know whether it was or not.

What was Mr. Jarrett like?

Really nice.

Was the drugstore popular?

Oh yeah. That's the only place we'd go. There was another drugstore on the highway. But we went there most of the time.

Was that Dr. Atkins? Adkins?

I don't remember what his name was.

Had they built the new drugstore?

It was there. But he had a drugstore over in the center of town but this was the one over on the railroad tracks. We'd have Cokes. We didn't buy much but we'd talk to him and he'd try to let us not pay when he could. But when Mrs. Jarrett was there she'd saw that we weren't paying and we'd pay.

Oh Mrs. Jarrett was there?

I don't know if they had any children or not but she was there some of the time. Especially after she had been a patient. She had a baby I guess I don't remember.

Yes. She had a baby. She seemed to like Nell Lipe very much.

Yeah. I haven't seen her in years. I got into nurses training and got away. (unintelligable) I was really in charge of the hospital. There was 2 of us graduates but one of us didn't know much about anything. She know but she was afraid to tell anybody what to do. She was more like an undergraduate nurse.

Did the student nurses go to church at All Souls? Was the hospital still connected?

Our nursing home was right across the street. We'd just have half a day. We tried to go into town occasion but we could hardly make it back in time. One time we missed the streetcar. We

had stopped to get some ice cream and we missed it so we had to wait on the next one. We know better than that. To be late, you know.

What were some other stores in the village? What about the Hot Shot Café? Was that off limits to student nurses?

No, But we hardly ever had the money to go, you know. On Sunday morning they would bring food over for those who were off that morning and we'd snatch it and carry it up the mountain and go on a picnic. So we didn't have to eat in the hospital.

So you always had you meals in the hospital. They didn't have a kitchen in the nurse's residence?

No.

I've heard on lady say that was a patient at Biltmore Hospital said over the years in all the fancy hospitals that she wished she'd had the care and open space that she had at Biltmore Hospital.

That's nice. There were usually 4 beds to a floor. Where we had the (obstetrics?) patients if they weren't in a private room we had something to go around them. When I took care of them they always wanted a joke or something so I got to telling one. I was covered up and I was telling a patient and all of them wanted to hear it. But I didn't hear the doctor and a nurse come to the door. So the doctor and nurse stood still and then clapped after the joke. It wasn't the best joke. It embarrassed me so. It tickled most patients to death. I'd talk to them and bathe them you know. I don't think some of the students talked to them very much. But I'm an Irishman (?) and anything I can do I did. I don't think I was the best nurse that there was but I got the $50 you though.

Did you have a graduation ceremony?

We had a graduation over across the street at the church. Everybody came; our folks. It was the first time we wore a white gown. We weren't crazy about it but mama made four. Two of the nurses would wear them and I wore one. There was one left one of the nurses was too fat so she had to make her own. So we started in and Miss Laxon gave us flowers to go on our arm. We felt like we were out of order carrying flowers that way. We weren't allowed to wear flowers in the hospital. A patient would give you a flower and they'd stick it in the ink. And the doctors would steal them and it would drip down on their coat. They quit swiping them. The last year I was there Dr. Ivey had to take care of me. I had to help the orderly lift the patients and take them to the room. Dr. Ivey pushed me over and he'd do the lifting when he operated. The other two doctors didn't. So one day when it happened Dr. Paulson (?) said "now Miss Craig why is it Dr. Ivey treats you so good lifting patients and the other doctors don't?" I said I don't know I guess he just likes me. And he said "now Miss Craig, Lula! Tell me the truth.